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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
HA-05 SY-05 MCT-01 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00
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O R 221550Z DEC 77
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3849
INFO AMEMBASSY ASUNCION
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
AMEMBASSY PARIS
/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 5158

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E.O. 11652 GDS
TAGS SHUM, AR
SUBJECT MOTHERS GROUP DISAPPEARANCES : "MONTONERO" DOCUMENT
BECOMING INOPERATIVE

REF: BUENOS AIRES 9715

1. WE SEE EVIDENCE THAT THE "MONTONERO PLOY"
DESCRIBED REFTEL IS TO BE TREATED NOW BY GOA AS AN
"INOPERATIVE" EXPLANATION OF THE FRENCH NUNS'
DISAPPEARANCE.

2. WE HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT ON TUESDAY (12/20) THE
PAPAL NUNCIO RECEIVED A FORMAL REPLY FROM THE
PRESIDENTS OFFICE TO THE NUNCIO'S EARLIER INQUIRY
REGARDING THE WHEREABOUTS OF THE MISSING NUNS. THE
HAND DELIVERED RESPONSE (WE WERE NOT TOLD WHO SIGNED
) , REITERATED THE GOVERNMENTS CONCERN REGARDING
THE NUNS DISAPPEARANCE AND PROMISED THAT EFFORTS

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WERE UNDER WAY TO LOCATE THEM. NO MENTION WAS MADE OF
MONTONERO INVOLVEMENT, THOUGH THE LETTER WAS DELIVERED THREE
DAYS AFTER THE FIRST CORPS COMMUNIQUE.

Department of State, AGIS/PSJ/SP
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With concurrence of:
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3. THE PAPAL NUNCIO, MSGR. PIO LAGHI, CALLED ON TUESDAY AFTERNOON ON FOREIGN MINISTER MONTES. THE NUNCIO, REPORTEDLY, GEGAN HIS CONVERSATION BY STRONGLY QUESTIONING THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE "MONTONERO" LETTER WHICH MONTES DID NOT REBUT. AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE MEETING THE NUNCIO STATED THAT HE COULD NOT SEND A REPORT TO ROME, ASSERTING THAT THE MONTONEROS WERE HOLDING THE NUNS FOR RANSOM, BASED ON NEWS STORIES; HE HAD TO RECEIVE AN OFFICIAL COMMUNICATION REGARDING THAT EVEN FROM THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS. ADMIRAL MONTES DID NOT AFFIRM HIS INTENTION TO SEND A NOTE.

4. WEDNESDAY'S (12/21) ARMY CONTROLLED DAILY LA OPINION FRONT PAGED A STORY THAT MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR HARGUINDEGUY HAD TOLD THE VISITING REPRESENTATIVE (A MR GADOT) OF MR EDGARD FAURE, PRESIDENT OF THE FRENCH HOUSE OF DEPUTIES, THAT HE WAS OPTIMISTIC THAT THE KIDNAPPING OF THE FRENCH NUNS WOULD HAV A "HAPPY ENDING." AGAIN A HIGH OFFICIAL SEEMS TO HAVE DENIED HIMSELF AN OPPORTUNITY TO CITE MONTONERO INVOLVEMENT.

5. OTHER EMBASSY CONTACTS -- INCLUDING ESPECHE GIL AT THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS MINISTRY'S NORTH AMERICAN DESK AND RICARDO YOFRE, SENIOR CIVILIAN AT THE PRESIDENCY, HAVE SIMPLY CLAMMED UP WHEN WE RAISED THE RECENT ABDUCTIONS, RATHER THAN TAKING GOA OFF THE HOOK BY REPEATING THE FIRST CORPS' ALLEGATION.

6. MEANWHILE THE FRENCH EMBASSY HAS BEEN ACTIVE IN POINTING OUT A DISCREPANCY BETWEEN KIDNAPPED SISTER ALICIA'S LETTER AND THE MONONERO'S DOCUMENT, BOTH OF WHICH WERE DELIVERED TO AGENCE FRANCE PRESS ON DECEMBER 17. SISTER ALICIA'S

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LETTER STATES THAT SHE IS BEING HELD BY A DISSIDENT GROUP OF THE GOVERNMENT -- "UNGROUPE DISCIDENT AU GOUVERNEMENT ACTUEL". EMBASSY OFFICIALS POINT OUT THAT THIS IS NOT A DEFINITION THAT WOULD PRECISELY FIT THE MONTONEROS. IN ADDITION, THE SYNTAX OF THE FRENCH AND THE SUBSEQUENT USE OF THE WORD "AQUI" ALONGSIDE THE FRENCH WORD "ICI" INDICATE TO FRENCH EMBASSY OFFICIALS THAT THE SISTER TRANSLATED THE LETTER INTO FRENCH FROM A SPANISH ORIGINAL.

7. COMMENT: WE ARE ENCOURAGED THAT THE CONSIDERED REACTION HERE BY THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN TO IGNORE THE 'MONTONERO' LETTER. IF BY TACIT UNDERSTANDING THE MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT CONTINUE TO REGARD THE MONTONERO LETTER AS "INOPERATIVE", IT WILL ENHANCE THE CHANCES OF LOCATING AND RELEASING OF THE DISAPPEARED NUNS AND SUPPORTERS OF THE

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